

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for effecting, via a computer network, substitution of at least one ordered item of at least one customer order, the method comprising:

receiving, via the computer network, at least one customer order, said at least

5 one customer order including at least one order line item relating to an ordered quantity of a particular item of inventory;

analyzing a selected portion of the received customer orders to determine whether at least one item of inventory has been oversold;

10 identifying order line items relating to an identified oversold item, wherein each order line item is associated with a respective customer order; and

substituting, based upon predefined criteria, at least one second item for the identified oversold item in selected customer orders.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said analyzing includes comparing the
15 analyzed order data to inventory data to determine whether at least one item of inventory has been oversold.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said comparing occurs before
20 fulfillment of said portion of received customer orders

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said substituting includes selecting, using said predefined criteria, desired order line items corresponding to the identified oversold item.

25 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the predefined criteria includes instructions for minimizing a number of order substitutions to be performed for each customer order.

30 6. The method of claim 1 wherein the predefined criteria includes instructions for selecting for substitution order line items which have a relatively highest order quantity.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the oversold item substitution occurs at a time of fulfillment of said portion of received customer orders.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said ordered item substitution is performed at a time of fulfilling an order without intervention from a human operator.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said ordered item substitution is performed by an automated computer process.

10. The method claim 1 wherein the predefined criteria includes a sorted list of substitute products from which the second item is chosen.

11. The method claim 10 wherein the predefined criteria includes ratio rules for substituting the second item for the first item.

12. The method of claim 1 further comprising sorting the identified order line items based upon the quantity value associated with each of the identified order line items.

13. The method of claim 1 further comprising sorting the identified order line items based upon a number of substitutions which has already been implemented in each customer order associated with the identified order line items.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein said analyzing includes aggregating a selected portion of the received customer orders to determine whether at least one item of inventory has been oversold.

15. A computer program product for effecting, via a computer network, substitution of at least one ordered item of at least one customer order, the computer program product comprising:

a computer usable medium having computer readable code embodied therein, the computer readable code comprising:

computer code for receiving, via the computer network, at least one customer order, said at least one customer order including at least one order line item relating to an ordered quantity of a particular item of inventory;

5 computer code for analyzing at least a portion of the received customer orders to determine whether at least one item of inventory has been oversold;

computer code for identifying order line items relating to an identified oversold item, wherein each order line item is associated with a respective customer order; and

10 computer code for substituting, based upon predefined criteria, at least one second item for the identified oversold item in selected customer orders.

16. The computer program product of claim 15 wherein the predefined criteria includes instructions for minimizing a number of order substitutions performed for each customer order.

15 17. The computer program product of claim 15 wherein the predefined criteria includes instructions for selecting for substitution order line items which have a relatively highest order quantity.

20 18. The computer program product of claim 15 wherein said ordered item substitution is performed by an automated computer process.

19. The computer program product of claim 15 wherein said substituting code includes:

25 computer code for consulting said predefined criteria to determine a first preferred substitution item for the identified oversold item; and

computer code for determining whether a sufficient quantity of the first preferred substitution item is available to be substituted for the identified oversold item.

30 20. The computer program product of claim 15 further comprising computer code for consulting said predefined criteria to determine a second preferred substitution item for the identified oversold item in response to a determination that

there is an insufficient quantity of the first preferred substitution item available to be substituted for the identified oversold item.

21. The computer program product of claim 15 wherein said substituting
code includes computer code for partially substituting an order line item for the
identified oversold item, said partial substitution code including:

computer code for reducing a quantity of the ordered item; and

computer code for adding new line item in the respective customer order for a
specified quantity of the second item.

22. The computer program product of claim 15 wherein said substituting
code includes computer code for fully substituting an order line item for the identified
oversold item, said full substitution including:

computer code for reducing a quantity of the ordered item to zero; and

computer code for adding new line item in the respective customer order for a
specified quantity of the second item.

23. A system for effecting, via a computer network, substitution of at least
one ordered item of at least one customer order, the system comprising:

at least one central processing unit;

at least one interface configured or designed to receive at least one customer
order via the computer network, said at least one customer order including at least one
order line item relating to an ordered quantity of a particular item of inventory; and
memory;

wherein the processing unit is configured or designed to store in the memory
customer order information and predefined criteria relating to item substitution rules;

said system being configured or designed to analyze at least a portion of the
received customer orders to determine whether at least one item of inventory has been
oversold;

said system being further configured or designed to identify order line items
relating to an identified oversold item, wherein each order line item is associated with
a respective customer order; and

said system being further configured or designed to substitute, based upon said predefined criteria, at least one second item for the identified oversold item in selected customer orders.

5 24. The system of claim 23 wherein the predefined criteria includes instructions for minimizing a number of order substitutions performed for each customer order.

10 25. The system of claim 23 wherein the predefined criteria includes instructions for selecting for substitution order line items which have a relatively highest order quantity.

15 26. The system of claim 23 wherein said ordered item substitution is performed by an automated computer process.

20 27. The system of claim 23 wherein the system is further configured or designed to sort the identified order line items based upon the quantity value associated with each of the identified order line items.

25 28. The system of claim 23 wherein the system is further configured or designed to sort the identified order line items based upon a number of substitutions which has already been implemented in each customer order associated with the identified order line items.

30 29. A method for effecting, via a computer network, substitution of at least one ordered item of at least one customer order, the method comprising:

receiving, via the computer network, at least one customer order, said at least one customer order including at least one order line item relating to an ordered quantity of a particular item of inventory;

analyzing at least a portion of the received customer orders to determine whether at least one item of inventory has been oversold;

identifying order line items relating to an identified oversold item, wherein each order line item is associated with a respective customer order; and

substituting, based upon predefined criteria, at least one second item for the identified oversold item in selected customer orders;

wherein said substituting includes:

- consulting said predefined criteria to determine a first preferred substitution item for the identified oversold item; and
- determining whether a sufficient quantity of the first preferred substitution item is available to be substituted for the identified oversold item.

30. The method of claim 29 further comprising consulting said predefined criteria to determine a second preferred substitution item for the identified oversold item in response to a determination that there is an insufficient quantity of the first preferred substitution item available to be substituted for the identified oversold item.

31. The method of claim 29 wherein said substituting includes partially substituting an order line item for the identified oversold item, said partial substitution including:

- reducing a quantity of the ordered item; and
- adding new line item in the respective customer order for a specified quantity of the second item.

32. The method of claim 29 wherein said substituting includes fully substituting an order line item for the identified oversold item, said full substitution including:

- reducing a quantity of the ordered item to zero; and
- adding new line item in the respective customer order for a specified quantity of the second item.

33. A system for effecting, via a computer network, substitution of at least one ordered item of at least one customer order, the system comprising:

- means for receiving, via the computer network, at least one customer order, said at least one customer order including at least one order line item relating to an ordered quantity of a particular item of inventory;

means for analyzing at least a portion of the received customer orders to determine whether at least one item of inventory has been oversold;

means for identifying order line items relating to an identified oversold item, wherein each order line item is associated with a respective customer order; and

means for substituting, based upon predefined criteria, at least one second item for the identified oversold item in selected customer orders.

34. A method for effecting, via a computer network, substitution of at least one ordered item of at least one customer order, the method comprising:

receiving, via the computer network, at least one customer order, said at least one customer order including at least one order line item, each order line item including an order quantity for a particular item of merchandise;

aggregating a selected portion of the plurality of customer orders, wherein the aggregated customer orders include a plurality of order line items;

analyzing the plurality of order line items to determine whether at least one item of merchandise has been oversold;

modifying at least a portion of the received customer orders by substituting alternate merchandise for ordered merchandise which has been identified as being oversold, where the substitution of merchandise items is implemented using predefined criteria; and

fulfilling the modified customer orders.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein said substitution is performed automatically, without intervention by a human.